

Contributions

REVERENCE FOR GOD'S HOUSE

L. W. DITCH

"Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord." Lev. 19:39.

For many months I have been thinking upon the subject given this article. I have been led to it by the boisterous conduct among the young people in various localities in which I have been. It is reported that a U. B. church in one place last winter the young people became so noisy that services were abandoned. This may be an extreme case but there are various stages of the same disease in all our congregations. The Brethren church is not doing its duty in teaching reverence for God's house. By many of our protestant churches it is far more neglected. Irreverence is a growing evil and if not soon checked will render spiritual worship an impossibility. We believe the way to curb the evil is to begin with ourselves. Let us look diligently lest there be among us a spirit of irreverence.

In the Old Testament scriptures there appears like stars in the rift of the clouds gems of truth which are deeper and more enduring than that which is revealed in the law of ceremonies. One such gem is revealed in the quotation above given. Jesus said, "I come to fulfill." That he fulfilled this command and thereby set for us an example is beyond controversy. Once upon entering his ministry and again at its close we find him driving from the temple those who desecrated it by acts of irreverence. By the endearing words, "My Father's house," Jesus bespeaks his reverence for the sanctuary of God. To him it was sacred tho others desecrated it.

The Word is abundant in illustration showing the evils of irreverence. Had Nadab and Abihu been careful in cultivating a true reverence for the things of God they would not have offended by offering strange fire unto him.

Had Uzzah been more reverent for God's ark he would not have laid impious hands upon it.

Had the people of Beth-she-meth been taught a proper reverence for the things belonging to God they would not have offended out of idle curiosity looking unto the ark. Those who desecrated the temple and were driven out by our Lord had lost their reverence for God's house.

To familiarize ourselves with the word of God or with his house of worship so that we handle the one as a common book, and conduct ourselves in the other as in an opera, theatre or any place of popular concourse is to deaden those finer sensibilities of the soul which keep us in the fittest condition to worship God rightly and joyously. Reverence for the things which belong to God's service is

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as essential to a right preparation of the heart and head for worship as is the harrow before sowing to fit the soil for seed.

Reverence is the first act of devotion and he who reveres not the sanctuary is not likely to reverence him to whom the house belongs.

Men and women coming together in God's house talk about cattle, hogs, crops, markets, politics and worldly progress. Talk of dresses, hats, pies, cakes, aunts and uncles. Amid perfect confusion arising from such conversation the preacher announces a hymn of praise. How many hymns will it take to fit such minds for worship? As well try to wash ten pounds of wool with an ounce of water. Even if singing did fit the mind for worship how many minds cease to travel on in the channel begun. Then, too, just as soon as the amen of the benediction is pronounced the same confusion is begun. Is all this reverence? Is it not more like the worship of Baal? Is it to be wondered at that the young have no reverence for God's house? Is it to be wondered at that they laugh, simper and whisper during services? Have they not caught the spirit of irreverence from our own conduct? I do not believe we should worship the house. But the house as the property of God and the place of his presence should lead us to act as if we believed the truth of what we profess.

A beloved minister, now dead, but whose life was most exemplary and whose influence (with the writer,) was more powerful than his sermons, never entered the sanctuary but with bowed head and measured step. I never saw him either in private or public life pick up the Bible but with a reverential air and with a tenderness most marked. I can see now, tho I could not then, how much this habitual spirit of reverence contributed to make him the godly man he was.

Reverence must not be confounded with long-faced-ness. Some people seem to think that to be reverent you must be as solemn as an owl. Wear as long a face as if you were at a funeral. Groan and sigh as if God were dead. Such conduct is as far from reverence as *pout* is from *powder*. It is this solemn, long-faced, hypocritical so-called reverence that drives the young from the sanctuary and brands our religion with the epitaph,

"Hark from the tomb a doleful sound."

A thing which savors of funerals, graveyards and ghosts, instead of that which it is a thing of life, joy and peace. True reverence wears a smile, speaks cheerful, deals charitably with the conduct of others. But regards as sacred and treats accordingly whatever belongs to God. Reverence is quiet, orderly and prayerful in the sanctuary.

Reverence forbids the use of God's house for any other purpose than worship, praying, singing, reading and expounding the word. Talking of things pertaining to the service of God, talking to the unconverted to lead them to Christ, and to one another about spiritual things are all legitimate actions for the sanctuary. But to talk of our worldly interests, to tell of our successes and reverses in material things is to turn God's house from a sacred to a profane use.

Reverence forbids gossip as well as courting. It is no worse for a loving young couple to court in the sanctuary than it is for elderly people to gossip before and after service. The truly reverent will forbear both. Reverence is the key which unlocks the door of the heart and leaves in the Holy Spirit by whom we are fitted and thro whom our service is rendered acceptable to God.

Without a becoming reverence for the place and things of God we can not have our hearts ready for the spirits' coming and so many souls lose great blessings.

Reverence is to the heart what dew is to the flower, a refreshing of all its subtle powers so that the services of the sanctuary beautify the character and render us more Christ like.

A spirit so blessed in its results, so detrimental to be without and the lack of which has so often met with the condemnation of God, should lead us to give it serious thought. May these weak words lead our feet more reverently into the sanctuary. May the blessings to be gained lead us to reverential conduct and conversation while there. "My house is a house of prayer," the more fully we make it so the more blessed will be our service and the more grace will the service impart. The Lord help you and me to make and keep sacred God's house.

BIBLE PORTRAITS—Noah

B. C. MOOMAW

It is both interesting and instructive to note how the godly influence of Enoch persevered in his family for several generations after his translation. We may not doubt that he diligently taught his children the fear of the Lord, that he instructed them in the accepted forms as well as in the essential morality of divine worship, and that he so strongly impressed his children with the spirit of righteousness which distinguished him, that to the third generation they were the especial objects of God's favor and friendship. We may certainly draw from this circumstance a strong argument for family religion. Parents who are so tenderly anxious for the welfare of their children, when left in the world without the parental protection, should learn how much more important it is to leave them a legacy of godliness, to im-